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AUTHOR Stier, William F., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

Athletic administrators, working cooperatively with members of the athletic staff, must strive to coordinate the contributions of all those involved with athletics while simultaneously attempting to meet the needs of all facets of the athletic program in the pursuit of excellence. This paper lists 18 specific competencies and skills normally associated with a highly competent and successful administrator of interscholastic and/or intercollegiate sports. The competencies are categorized under the concepts of: (1) technical skills; (2) interpersonal skills; (3) conceptual skills; and (4) dedication and commitment skills. (JD)

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Competencies of Athletic Administrators

by

Dr. William F. Stier, Jr.
Professor of Physical Education and Sport
Director of Intercollegiate Athletics
State University of New York
Brockport, New York

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In today's educational and athletic circles, it is more imperative than ever that athletic administrators demonstrate highly developed skills and understandings if the ultimate objectives of interscholastic and intercollegiate athletics are to be realized.

The athletic program is often likened to a table (with five legs) with the top of the table representing the total athletic program for men and women. The five legs to this mythical table are viewed as (1) the athletic participation dimension (the student athletes themselves), (2) the athletic training and sports medicine dimension, (3) the athletic coaching dimension, (4) the public relations dimension, and (5) the athletic administration/organization dimension.

If any single leg of this table is weakened or absent, the table tilts, or completely falls. It is the responsibility of the individual assuming the role of athletic administrator, working cooperatively with a whole host of constituencies (both within the school and outside the confines of the organized educational entity) to ensure that all of the table legs remain stable and continue to support the table top, that is, the total sports program, which involves full participation by male and female students in the

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pursuit of the established athletic and academic goals.

Athletic administrators, working cooperatively and harmoniously with members of the athletic staff, must strive to coordinate the contributions of all those involved with athletics while simultaneously attempting to meet the needs of all facets of the athletic program in the pursuit of excellence. However, the relationship between athletic administrators and others involved in the world of athletics (at both the secondary and post secondary level) is often tenuous and rocky. The relationship can easily become adversarial in nature. It is essential that this fragile, often nebulous relationship can be strengthened and clarified by a thorough understanding of exactly what is expected of athletic administrators as well as a similar, thorough understanding of what athletic administrators expect from those with whom they must work with or depend upon. Through this mutual understanding and appreciation of the roles and expectations of one another, athletic administrators and others involved in athletics are more likely to experience success in their respective roles within the world of sports.

Athletic administrators are often evaluated in terms of the degree in which they possess certain qualities, skills, or competencies. These competencies are categorized as: (1) technical skills -- those basic skills, aspects of sport administration, the x's and o's of the activities in which the individual is professionally involved; (2) interpersonal skills -- the ability to deal with various constituencies (individuals, groups and organizations) within and outside the school itself; (3) conceptual skills -- the ability to see the big picture, the broad spectrum, for the entire athletic department, school or educational system, in contrast to merely possessing tunnel vision involving one's own little program or area, and (4) dedication and commitment skills -- the ability to reach and to go beyond the

call of duty in the performance of one's tasks, the willingness to put significant effort and time into the performance and completion of the other three skills mentioned above. Dedication can be expressed in terms of how hard one is willing to work, with effectiveness and efficiency, to achieve established goals and objectives.

Athletic administrators have definite obligations towards others with whom they are involved in the athletic setting. Similarly, athletic administrators have the right to expect that others have obligations towards them as administrators of athletic sports. To the degree that the administrators and others involved in the sports programs recognize and understand and appreciate the role(s), responsibilities and needs of each other, the likelihood of a smooth running athletic program is enhanced.

In terms of qualifications of athletic administrators, the following are some of the competencies and skills normally associated with a highly competent and successful administrator of interscholastic and/or intercollegiate sports.

(A) the ability to serve as a mediator and to be a stabilizing force among the staff members -- coaches, athletic trainers, sports information specialists, administrators -- as well as among the various segments of the general public.

(B) the ability to give direction (motivation) and guidance to the coaching staff.

(C) the ability to have the capacity and willingness to develop, foster and facilitate positive, professional and personal feelings of community and teamwork among the total athletic staff.

(D) the ability to give due recognition as well as demonstrative support to the athletic coach as the expert in the particular sport he or she

coaches. It is the athletic coach who is the recognized expert in the area of coaching athletes in his/her recognized sport, rather than the Monday morning quarterbacks, the grandstand managers, parents or family friends.

(E) the ability and willingness to provide personal and professional incentives and rewards (tangible and intangible) for individuals comprising the athletic coaching and support staff.

(F) the ability to have the confidence of upper-level administration. This is truly a great asset. Without strong and consistent support from top-level management, an athletic administrator is relegated to nothing more than a messenger to and from the central administration.

(G) the ability to utilize one's power, prestige, influence, authority and wherewithal to actually accomplish objectives within the academic, athletic and political matrix of the school. It matters little if an athletic director is willing to fight the battles for the coaching staff or the athletic program if this same athletic director fails to win a significant number of such skirmishes.

(H) the ability to exhibit fairness, consistency, loyalty and frankness in dealing with the athletic coaching staff, the athletes, other athletic staff members and with other members of the school system.

(I) the ability and willingness, through collegial efforts, to involve all members of the athletic staff, in the establishment of reasonable goals and objectives which are framed by appropriate time parameters.

(J) the ability and willingness to provide adequate budget and other forms of support, e.g., staff, personnel, working conditions, time, rewards, tools and assets, necessary to reach agreed-upon and recognized objectives.

(K) the ability and willingness to hire competent athletic staff and then to allow them to do their jobs within established guidelines. The

ability to resist the temptation to assume an interfering posture in terms of day-to-day activities of athletic staff is of paramount importance.

(L) the ability to establish and utilize open communication channels with all members of the athletic and non-athletic staff as well as members of the general public. The ability to become a sounding board for the athletic coaching staff and to be willing to listen to and solicit recommendations and input from others -- and then to be able to make decisions based upon the data collected -- is an important asset for an athletic administrator.

(M) the ability to recognize and to act and to react in an appropriate manner to the weaknesses as well as the strengths of those individuals with whom one must work. An athletic administrator is only as good as those individuals with whom he or she must work and depend upon. It is imperative that the athletic director is capable of distinguishing strengths and weaknesses of others so as to place these individuals in situations appropriate to their current capabilities and future potential.

(N) the ability and willingness to provide in-service educational opportunities for staff members to upgrade professional skills and competencies, both for present responsibilities and for future and potential assignments. Coaches deserve to have opportunities made available to them within the system to upgrade their skills and enhance their positions.

(O) the ability to provide for and to conduct sound, continual, objective and subjective evaluation and feedback for staff members. These should be done for professional development as well as for advancement and/or retention purposes. Coaches need and deserve to be made aware of the basis for their professional evaluation as well as the method, timetable and the possible consequences of said evaluation.

(P) the ability to demonstrate absolute honesty, and respect for

individual differences within the entire athletic staff. The ability and willingness to hold dear the principal tenets of Affirmative Action, Title IX as well as Section 504 -- and to act accordingly, is an absolute must.

(Q) the ability and willingness to avoid asking anyone to do something which the athletic administrator would not be willing to do in terms of dedication, professionalism, competency level, workload assumption or time management. This includes effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of one's duties and responsibilities. While this does not suggest that the athletic administrator must possess the same level of technical skill in coaching various sports, it does imply that the athletic administrator should lead through example.

(R) the ability and willingness to assist athletic coaches who seek better career positions within or outside the current school system. This includes a willingness to become a mentor to those athletic staff members desiring such a relationship to progress professionally. One should not be afraid of serving as a stepping stone for highly qualified athletic coaches as long as these individuals continue to demonstrate competency and loyalty while they are employed within the athletic program. One should not begrudge one's athletic staff's professional advancement elsewhere. Rather, one should count one's blessings that the athletic coaches on one's own staff are highly attractive to other school districts and athletic programs. To have it otherwise, i.e., to have staff members who are not employable by any other athletic program or school, is a negative indictment against one's current athletic program and employment practices.

SUMMARY

It is the responsibility of the athletic administrator, working in cooperation with the athletic coaching staff, members of the general public,

the support staff and with the actual sport participants themselves, to coordinate the talents and potential contributions of all involved with the athletic program. Now, more than ever before, the position of the professionally trained, competent, and dedicated athletic director is being recognized as an integral and indispensable entity within the total athletic program -- at all levels.

The competencies cited above, on behalf of the athletic administrator, reflect the major areas which forward looking administrators would do well to attempt to develop and refine if they wish to be fully "armed" with the prerequisites (in terms of professional skills) deemed necessary for survival, much less, success within the amateur athletic world.

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